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ABSTRACT

This report describes an exemplary Oregon middle school that incorporates a comprehensive program of academic instruction and activity, a community of dedicated staff and involved students, and an orderly environment marked by a businesslike approach to teaching and learning. Outstanding components of Philomath Middle School's climate for learning are (1) an emphasis on positive aspects of student achievement and behavior, as characterized by a vital homeroom program and frequent recognition for group and individual achievement; (2) an atmosphere of order and discipline maintained by assertive discipline and shared staff responsibility; (3) a high priority for excellence supported by continuous staff invovement in curriculum improvement and encouragement of superior student performance; and (4) a high level of student and staff participation in a variety of cocurricular activities. Teachers work with elementary and high school counterparts to create a well-articulated curriculum emphasizing basic skills. All students study English, mathematics, social studies, and science for all 4 years, in addition to receiving computer literacy and daily physical education instruction. Seventh and eighth graders also participate in an acclaimed occupational versatility program. Staff unity, flexibility, and open communication contribute to meeting individual students' academic and developmental needs. (MJL)

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Preface

Oregon School Study Council Bulletins are designed to focus attention upon promising practices in Oregon schools. In this issue we summarize the total program of one school that exemplifies the many excellent practices being carried out by Oregon educators.

Philomath Middle School, which serves 420 fifth through eighth graders, was opened in December 1973. After more than ten years it remains a handsome structure showing few signs of wear. But far more than its physical aspects sparks the pride of the Philomath community and draws visitors from around the state and the country. The chapters of this Bulletin attempt to capture elements of its climate and program and the dedicated teamwork of its staff who have created at Philomath Middle School a truly fine program worthy of emulation.

This is the last Bulletin to be written by Lois Rawers, OSSC graduate research assistant. She is leaving the Universsity of Oregon campus to assume the principalship of Independence Elementary School in Central School District 13J.

Philip K. Piele
Executive Secretary

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Introduction

Philomath Middle School sits back a comfortable distance from Plymouth Road on the southeast edge of this small Willamette Valley community. A single-story structure, it is surrounded by expansive, rolling, and well-groomed grounds and play areas. This school's exterior and interior both exhibit clean, uncluttered designs. Inside, extensive surfaces of wood and bold colors create an open, warm, and inviting atmosphere.

This openness is most evident in the centrally located Instructional Media Center (IMC) from which a majority of the school's classrooms radiate and which serves as the center of many learning activities. (See floorplan, Appendix A.) Although heavily used for school and community activities, the school's common areas--including the IMC, main hallway, multipurpose room, and gymnasium-auditorium--and its classrooms are neat and show few signs of wear. Indeed, many of the frequent visitors to Philomath Middle School assume it is a brand new building and are amazed to learn it has been in use for ten years. Principal Wendell Seat attributes the like-new condition of the facility to the extreme pride Philomath students, staff, and patrons feel for this middle school. He explains that students note the efforts of staff in maintaining high standards of order and care and that students, in turn, also realize that the school's continued fine reputation depends upon them and their actions.

But the essence of Philomath Middle School extends far beyond its physical setting and structure. It is a comprehensive program of academic instruction and activity. It is a community of dedicated and

interested staff members and involved students. It is an orderly, but certainly not oppressive, environment marked by a down-to-business approach to teaching and learning.

According to Ronald Ball, former Philomath Middle School principal and director of the original building and program design, the school's development was based upon the philosophy that a middle school environment should be more akin to that of an elementary school rather than the "little high school" atmosphere so often evident in junior high schools. He believes this philosophy still prevails at PMS. He points out, "Without a staff's total commitment to and agreement with a philosophy, the best conceived program will not succeed." He concludes that PMS's staff manifests such total commitment and agreement.

The chapters of this Bulletin tell the story of the people who make Philomath Middle School what it is, the programs and the methods they employ to reach students, and the caring and efficacious climate they have created.

The Climate for Learning

The most evident components of Philomath Middle School's climate for learning are an emphasis on positive aspects of student achievement and behavior, an atmosphere of order and discipline, a high priority for excellence, and active student and staff participation in school activities.

Emphasis on the Positive

Philomath Middle School staff members make a conscious effort to help each student develop a positive self-concept. The school's homeroom program, awards recognizing student achievement and behavior, and numerous other incentives during the school year combine with teachers' and administrators' day-to-day, informal feedback to students to promote student self-esteem.

Philomath's homeroom program was developed and initiated by teachers soon after the school opened and has been updated, modified, and extended by teams of teachers on summer assignment several times since its introduction in 1976. Its original purpose was to provide each student a "home base" contact with one teacher and a small group of students. It still serves that purpose. In addition, homeroom activities have been designed to create school and homeroom group spirit, foster positive thinking, develop student responsibility and self-awareness, and help students assess their own interests and abilities.

Counselor Marie Campbell coordinates the homeroom program and assists teachers in lining up materials they need for activities. A

voluminous guide outlines units and calendar for the year and serves as a reservoir of activities from which teachers may select materials to reinforce unit themes. These themes include goal-setting, hobbies, positive outlook, self-evaluation, self-discipline and responsibility, problem solving, trust, individual differences, and the democratic process.

Teachers and students alike participate in high interest exercises that form an integral part of each unit. Besides daily activities that teachers and students pursue within their own homeroom groups, some events are schoolwide and have become highlights of the year. For instance, early October brings Hobby Days when students have a chance to share and display their out-of-school interests via homeroom presentations and an evening open house for parents. Teachers believe that Hobby Days give students the chance to "show off" talents and knowledge that their classmates would not otherwise know they possess. Students come to view one another with new respect and from an altered, more positive perspective.

Patriotism Week, scheduled in conjunction with Veterans' Day each November, provides opportunity for dialogue within homeroom groups about patriotism and citizens' rights and responsibilities. The week's discussions and activities culminate in a schoolwide flag-raising ceremony and patriotic assembly.

Homeroom periods during the week before Christmas vacation are usually devoted to creating decorations for homeroom classroom doors. Students' creative efforts are judged by an impartial panel that selects a number of award-winning doors.

Another schoolwide event that is initiated through homeroom is the annual Spelling Bee. Students take part in homeroom spelling bees to determine who will participate in the All School Spelling Assembly. Both the homeroom and the all-school events adhere to state spelling contest rules, with school winners proceeding to district level competition at Linn-Benton ESD.

The homeroom program also provides an avenue for well-organized student body officer campaigns and elections during a week devoted to the democratic process each spring. Homeroom groups nominate candidates for each student body office to run in a "primary." This balloting narrows the field to three who then make campaign speeches in an assembly prior to the official, secret-ballot election. The democratic process is reemphasized each fall shortly after school resumes when student body officers and newly elected homeroom representatives hold a model student council meeting during a special homeroom assembly.

High interest in homeroom activities is maintained until the very end of the year. The final homeroom-based highlight is the Annual Super Bowl fashioned after television's College Bowl. Homeroom groups select their own representative teams who compete against other homerooms in an assembly in late May.

Besides being recognized for positive action as part of their homeroom groups, Philomath Middle School students are also frequently noted for their individual actions. Students who display especially helpful behavior to fellow students or to staff members receive "Brave Deed Awards" that entitle them to go out for lunch with the principal at the end of the month. During most months ten or more students are

selected by teachers and administrators to be so rewarded.

Students are also recognized formally for their individual achievements at Awards Assemblies during the school year. Here, certificates are presented by teachers for academic accomplishments, as well as for participation in music, drama, and sports activities.

Individual teachers and staff members at Philomath Middle School frequently initiate their own incentive programs that motivate students to work toward mastery of new skills and worthwhile work habits. For example, Assistant Principal Dwight Grass organized B.E.A.R. (Be Enthusiastic About Reading) night this winter in conjunction with Oregon Love of Reading Month. All fifth and sixth graders who had read at least 700 pages of library books during the month of February were entitled to sleep overnight in the school's IMC one Friday night in early March following an evening with a guest story teller and their own favorite books. Nearly fifty students, as well as their teachers, took advantage of this all-night event. An extra treat was Saturday morning breakfast prepared by teachers.

Librarian Shirley Mason also works hard to motivate Philomath Middle School students to get more involved with books. Her most recent endeavor culminated in April during Library Week. For the three preceding months she ran a weekly Calendar Clue Hunt. Mason notes that the search for the week's answer inspired many a student who had never touched reference books to delve into them with fervor. The first student to come up with each week's answer won a milkshake from Mason. Besides that immediate reward, any student who found the right answer on Monday accumulated five points, those with the answer by Tuesday chalked

up four points, and so on through the week. Come Library Week, Mason tallied up everyone's points and presented the high point student with a gift certificate from a local bookstore.

Orderly Atmosphere

Philomath Middle School staff members don't stop with motivation of students to do their best. They also create an atmosphere for learning in which order and discipline are maintained. Teachers employ assertive discipline techniques, and all staff members feel responsible for ensuring an orderly climate. The first topic in every classroom on the first day of school each fall is a thorough review of Philomath Middle School's code of conduct. Individual teachers and their students also establish ground rules for day-to-day classroom operations.

Perhaps the most obvious manifestation of teachers' united approach to creating an orderly atmosphere is their habit of being available and visible to students outside classrooms and in main hallways and the IMC before school, between classes, and after school every day. They have found that their availability allows for informal contact with students, while their visibility helps remind students to follow school rules.

Despite all their preventive actions, Philomath teachers realize there will inevitably be student behaviors that require disciplinary measures. Therefore, standing procedures are in place to be applied when necessary. Students who disrupt classroom activities or who are repeatedly unprepared for class are assigned to noon detention. Any student who must serve noon detention four times in any two-week period must stay after school for an hour. This afterschool period is designed to help students organize and prioritize their time and class materials.

In addition, the principal contacts and confers with parents in order to discover, and hopefully solve, the student's problems before they become uncontrollable. further remedies include inschool suspensions and, as a last resort, out-of-school suspensions.

Both teachers and administrators maintain close contact with parents. This continuous contact deals with positive student behavior and achievement, as well as efforts at remediation and intervention.

Indeed, Philomath's educators' efforts to create an orderly atmosphere for learning have paid off. Since students are well aware of teachers' expectations and the limits of acceptable behavior in class, teachers need to devote a minimum of instruction time to disciplinary matters. Similarly, students are well aware of schoolwide limits upon behavior and conduct themselves appropriately outside of class.

Excellence, A Priority

Philomath staff members constantly strive to provide their students the best academic program possible and to promote excellent student performance in that program. Teachers play an integral role in district curriculum development and revision. In addition, individuals and groups of Philomath teachers are continuously working at the school level to improve and update all areas of the curriculum.

Recently, the school established Curriculum Advisory Committees for mathematics, language arts, science, and social studies. Each of these groups is composed of the principal, two middle school teachers, one teacher from Philomath Elementary School, one from Philomath High School, and several community members specifically selected for their expertise in the particular subject area. For example, the Mathematics

Curriculum Advisory Committee boasts a bank teller, an accountant, and Oregon State University professors of mathematics and engineering. The school's staff believes committee members will help improve the program through their specialized expertise by asking questions to focus teachers' attention upon gaps and overlaps in the curriculum, and by ensuring that components of the program relate to the "real world."

Like most Oregon schools, Philomath Middle School operates on a nine-week grade reporting cycle. Each reporting period, approximately 20 percent of the student body makes the "honor roll" with a grade point average of 3.5 or better. These students receive certificates of achievement in assemblies four times a year and have their names published in the local newspaper. Principal Seat has tried a new approach to challenging students to improve their grades this year. He awards those whose marks show the most progress from the previous nine weeks certificates of accomplishment and treats them to a pizza party. In this way, Seat explains, "Those who work hard to improve, even though they may not be the school's top students, receive recognition for their efforts."

Midterm, or five-week, progress reports supplement nine-week grade cards. Teachers employ these to informally notify students and their parents of emerging academic problem areas, as well as to alert them to improving achievement. Invariably, these midterm reports are accompanied by a telephone conversation or conference between teacher and parent.

To ensure that students' attention and efforts are directed mainly toward academic achievement and to guarantee that extracurricular

activities do not jeopardize that achievement, Philomath Middle School teachers and coaches enforce an eligibility system. Student participation in athletics and other cocurricular activities is contingent upon maintaining adequate performance in academic classwork. Student athletes whose performance slips below acceptable levels may not compete for at least two weeks, but they may still practice with their teams. Thus, their interest in the sport does not wane and they are motivated to study and regain eligibility.

Further insurance that cocurricular activities do not distract students' attention nor take time from academic pursuits is the school's Thursday activity period. Each Thursday all classes are shortened by five minutes and the lunch period is shortened by twenty minutes. This allows an extra period at the end of the day for assemblies, club meetings, student council, and early dismissal of seventh and eighth grade athletes who are traveling to events away from Philomath.

Active Participation

At the same time that teachers and administrators strive to promote excellence and maintain high student interest in their academic program, they also provide many chances for students to participate in cocurricular activities. These opportunities are designed to serve a wide variety of interests and talents. Some appeal to and motivate relatively small numbers of students with specialized interests while others attract nearly all students. Several groups take advantage of Thursday's activity period to pursue their special interests. Teacher Jim Miller's Chess Club members practice strategies with one another in order to improve their skills and, for some, a chance to prepare for

Annual Emerald League Chess Tournament play. Teacher Donna Helm and her Computer Club buffs also come together Thursday afternoons to exchange ideas and learn new computing skills.

Students take part in public speaking competition that culminates in the Annual Emerald League Forensics Tournament. This year the April tournament was held in Philomath and organized by PMS English teacher Elsie Springer. She explains that students compete at two levels (one for grades five and six and one for seventh through ninth) and in four categories (impromptu, informative, persuasive, and interpretive reading). The league's eight schools entered over eighty students in the Philomath-hosted tournament.

Music teacher Diane Lamb and fifth-grade teacher Bonnie Laing give students a chance to develop dramatic and performing skills each year when they produce a musical. Their auditions attract so many students that this year they selected two complete casts for "The Wizard of Oz" and presented it four times in April--twice with each cast. The performers, including a sixty-member student orchestra, drew rave reviews from community members as did last year's performers of "The Sound of Music."

Another cocurricular performing group is Diane Lamb's Jazz Band. Twenty-five highly motivated sixth, seventh, and eighth graders come to school early three days a week just to have the chance to play jazz together.

Well over 90 percent of PMS students parititpate in the year-round intramural sports program supervised by Mike Crocker, physical education teacher. Homerooms field teams to compete in a rich variety of

activities ranging from the common, such as basketball and soccer, to the uniques, including a pole and stone throwing contest and superball competition. Teams and individuals representing fifth- and sixth-grade homerooms play among one another while seventh- and eighth-grade teams compete separately. Homerooms accumulate points for entering events, for winning or placing in a series of games or activities, and for good sportsmanship. Plaques are awarded to the homerooms that win each series of intramural activities, and homeroom trophies go to overall point-winning homerooms each half year.

The high level of student participation stems from teachers' strong and continuous support of and enthusiasm for the intramural program and from its widely varied activities. These activities are devised to draw students who are not normally involved in athletic competition, as well as to appeal to those who typically do compete in sports. Not only are strength, agility, and coordination rewarded, but students find endurance, enthusiasm, tenacity, and a positive attitude also pay big benefits. Variety of another dimension is also responsible for the high level of participation. Students can participate individually as representatives of their homerooms in events such as tetherball and cross country, in pairs as in badminton and four-square, and on teams such as field hockey and kickball.

Like so many programs at Philomath Middle School, intramurals lead students to discover new interests and talents within themselves and to view their classmates with new respect as they come to recognize and appreciate their strengths.

Students who wish to be even more involved in athletics participate

in the afterschool sports programs. Fifth- and sixth-grade students can play flag football, basketball, and soccer, plus develop their track and field skills. Seventh- and eighth-grade teams, only, play in interschool competition. They compete against other Emerald League teams in track, volleyball, football, wrestling, baseball, and softball. The emphasis of the interschool sports program is upon participation. All students who want to play can play. No one is eliminated from teams, and coaches ensure that all get an equal chance to play. Philomath Middle School administrators initiated the original development of league rules that still govern play and that guarantee consistent, fair, and full participation by seventh- and eighth-grade athletes. Charles Vaughn, former asistant principal at Philomath Middle School, explains that they felt athletic experiences at the middle school level must be positive ones for all participants rather than only for those with superior athletic ability. Therefore, they sought and gained cooperation of other league schools in bringing about fuller, more positive participation.

Another activity that, like intramurals, draws the participation of the entire PMS student body is Interim Week just before spring vacation each year. During this week regular class schedules are set aside and teachers offer a wide variety of minicourses for student exploration. Several weeks ahead of time students have access to "catalogs" from which they can select, and then register for, two minicourses to attend during Interim Week. Course offerings have included "Writing for Fun and Money," "The Art of Clowning," "Body Workout," "Downhill Skiing," "Rocketry," "Fly Tying," "Delicious Desserts," "Calligraphy," and

"Bicycling." Students usually have over thirty classes from which to choose. Students await the week with anxious anticipation. Teachers do too for they know it will be an exhausting one. But each year, despite its demands, they choose to schedule Interim Week. Their reasoning includes, of course, student enthusiasm for it. They also believe it provides a chance for them to work with students who are not in their regular classes, and it allows students to explore new areas and develop new interests. Teachers also believe that Interim Week classes give students a chance to see their instructors as unique human beings whose interests extend beyond classroom topics.

The Academic Program

As explained in the previous chapter, Philomath Middle School teachers work with their elementary and high school counterparts to create a well-articulated curriculum in which skills and concepts are properly sequenced to preclude gaps and overlaps in content. Each content area is reviewed periodically and regularly by districtwide curriculum study teams. The recently established PMS Curriculum Advisory Committees will also work to ensure proper articulation with elementary and high school programs through continual review and rethinking of middle school curriculum.

Philomath Middle School's carefully planned and executed curriculum contributed in no small measure to the school receiving full accreditation by the Northwest Accreditation Association in 1976 as one of the first middle schools in Oregon to do so.

Basics Emphasized

Philomath Middle School's curriculum reflects the staff's philosophy that their primary duty is to promote the development of every student's basic academic skills. All students study English, mathematics, social studies, and science all four of their middle school years. Reading, quite naturally, figures significantly into daily fifth- and sixth-grade instruction. Reading also plays a prominent role in seventh- and eighth-grade studies. Seventh and eighth graders alike attend reading classes. Only a very few who read well above grade level are permitted to substitute an elective for reading. (Plans to make reading a strict requirement even for these advanced students are

currently being considered for next year.)

Teachers strive to meet individual student needs for reading skill development at all four grade levels. Fifth- and sixth-grade teachers zealously guard morning periods against interference with basic skills instruction and practice time. By preserving simultaneous time blocks for reading instruction teachers can exchange students and work with homogeneous reading groups of fifth and sixth graders in order to meet individual needs.

Individual seventh and eighth graders' needs and abilities are also taken into account by their reading instructors. Advanced students forego regular reading skills development lessons and delve into reading literary works and analyzing, critiquing, and discussing them in class. Special needs are also met through remedial reading classes. These classes are kept very small so that students can receive lots of individual attention.

Teachers also work to meet individual students' needs for mathematics skill development. Advanced eighth-grade students are placed in either Beginning Algebra or Advanced Mathematics depending on their performance on placement tests.

Fifth- and sixth-grade teachers form a unified, but flexible, mathematics instruction team. At the start of each year they administer a diagnostic test to determine which of twenty-five skill areas their students have yet to master. Based on the results of this test, teachers set up initial instructional groups for the first three-week period. Students who need to master a specific skill are placed together regardless of their grade level. If, after three weeks, a

student has mastered the skill, he or she moves on to work on a new skill with a new group and another teacher. If he still needs to practice the skill for three more weeks in order to master it, he continues with the same skill but with a different group and a different teacher. Teachers test, then meet to discuss results and assign teachers and students to skill areas every three weeks. They keep accurate, detailed records of each child's placement, skill needs, and skill mastery. They also integrate problem-solving skills and practice into each of the twenty-five skill areas.

Sixth-grade teacher Mike Walker believes that this approach to mathematics instruction especially benefits students because they are "exposed to several different teachers. The second time a student receives instruction on a skill from a second teacher with a second approach may be more effective." Besides making it possible to capitalize on the combined strengths of eight teachers (and sometimes nine when an Oregon State University student teacher is in residence), Principal Seat believes that the regular, every three-week planning sessions have created a well-coordinated team. Communication is quite open, flexibility in planning is greatly enhanced, and coordination among these teachers spans much more than mathematics instruction due to these frequent and regular meetings.

Science teachers Ed Hurff and Scott Mortlock work with seventh and eighth graders and build upon the solid basis of concepts and hands-on experiences that students receive in fifth, sixth, and earlier grades. In seventh-grade, Life Science students are introduced to quantitative techniques plus problem-solving in laboratory activities that are

designed to help students study the environment, ecology, reproduction, and genetics through the inquiry method. Eighth graders delve into the structure of matter and metric measurement in the study of geology, oceanography, and astronomy.

Current work with the science curriculum is indicative of the school's and the district's ongoing program of curriculum rethinking and revision. Hurff and Mortlock are taking steps to incorporate the microcomputer as a tool in science inquiry into the school's laboratory activities. Districtwide, science teachers are revising program goals and matching them with objectives and activities to guarantee that concepts, processes, and skills, which all agree are important, do, indeed, form an articulated K-12 program.

Greg Sumners and Frances Harper combine their expertise in social studies to teach Philomath Middle School seventh graders Global Geography, which incorporates map skills, researching and reporting, and global studies. They emphasize the interdependency of nations, multicultural diversity, and the impact of technology on society. Sumners provides eighth graders their first traditional history course as they explore the story of the United States, past and present.

Study skills and library research techniques form an integral part of the curriculum in all four grades. Shirley Mason, librarian, works closely with classroom teachers and their students as they investigate specific topics. For example, this winter fifth graders made ample use of library references and Mason's advice as they researched various animal groups. Sixth graders applied and improved their library research skills as they studied Latin American topics. All of the

school's classroom teachers work closely with the librarian to create basic familiarity with library resources in their students. For example, eighth-grade literature teacher Jinny Wold teams up with Mason when she leads her students into the world of historical fiction. Students must possess familiarity with library sources in order to trace a historical character from nonfictional sources to works of historical fiction and critique the fictional treatment of that character. A side effect of this research that both Wold and Mason observe is heightened interest in and a more critical view of biographies.

In addition to assisting students and teachers in specific areas as the need arises, Mason follows a carefully organized, class-by-class approach to library skills instruction. Fifth graders receive an introduction to library and card catalog use, sixth graders are introduced to references and some indices, while seventh and eighth graders explore references, indices, and guides in more depth.

Another source of support for Philomath Middle School classroom teachers in meeting individual student needs is the Educational Resource Center out of which Barbara Robinson, Chapter I reading teacher, and Sandra Kohl, resource teacher, work. They keep close tabs on the progress of individual students they work with in the center and on those same students' classroom progress in content areas. For example, Kohl checks bimonthly with teachers on the achievement and work habits of all twenty-seven students who are on Individual Educational Programs. Her aim is to know when any of these children first falls behind in progress and to immediately take steps to remediate problems. Reading teacher Becky Kreft credits Kohl with an uncanny ability to keep in

constant touch with all classroom teachers.

Beyond Basics

Fifth- and sixth-grade teachers plan and execute the complete elementary grade program of language arts, mathematics, social studies, science, health, and art, plus the homeroom foundations explained earlier. In addition, their students receive instruction in First Aid, music, and physical education.

All fifth-grade teachers are certified to teach the Red Cross Basic First Aid course. Students work their way through written lessons and practice sessions in order to receive their own First Aid cards and certificates by the end of the year.

Fifth and sixth graders benefit, as do seventh and eighth graders, from daily physical education instruction. The school's program is also enhanced by music instruction in general music, in beginning band for fifth graders, in intermediate band for sixth graders, and in choir. Over fifty seventh and eighth graders participate in advanced band. The music program at Philomath Middle School is strongly supported by patrons. According to music instructor Lamb, 64 percent of the student body is involved in musical performing groups.

A recent addition to the formal curriculum is computer instruction at all levels. Donna Helm works with fifth- and sixth-grade teachers to provide beginning LOGO computer literacy instruction to all students. Seventh and eighth graders are targeted for more involved computer literacy and elementary programming lessons as a part of Philomath Middle School's acclaimed occupational versatility program known as Allied Learning in Vocational Exploration (ALIVE).

ALIVE was initiated back in 1973 when the school first opened. Frances Harper, home economics, and Jim Miller, industrial arts, were a part of the original ALIVE team. They explain that their purpose was to create an "occupational versatility" offering that incorporated home economics, industrial arts, and creative arts. Most programs existing at that time concentrated on one of these aspects or the other, so the Philomath teachers devised their own program that included all three components. They built it around a common management system in which students manage their own learning and work at their own pace and level guided by teachers, project notebooks, and a wide variety of other resources. Students gain the requisite skills to make their own products while they explore a wide variety of vocational and avocational areas.

This year the fourth exploration area, computing, was added to ALIVE. All students as seventh or eighth graders spend one year in ALIVE, which includes one nine-week term each with Harper in home economics, Miller in industrial arts, Diane Azevedo in art, and Donna Helm in computing. Eighth graders may elect a second year in ALIVE and concentrate upon their own choice of exploration areas and projects.

The Staff

Philomath School District Superintendent Lee Edwards sees the middle school staff as a group of educators who really care about students and who devote long hours during school and beyond developing and delivering an instructional program that will meet the needs of every individual student. He believes that the staff's unity and positive attitude carries over to their students, making every one of them feel a part of the school family. Principal Wendell Seat agrees with Edwards' observations and adds, "These people are very professional experts in their fields who try to make instruction interesting as well as useful." He goes on to explain that their highly coordinated approach, flexibility, and open communication go far to ensure that individual student needs are met.

Philomath Middle School teachers also see their principal as open to new ideas and flexible to try new approaches. For example, Kay Glathar and Theresa Rybel were able to job-share a sixth-grade teaching position this year after careful planning and receiving approval of administrators. Seat believes that his flexibility in approving the new arrangement has resulted in great benefits to students. Both Glathar and Rybel each devote much more than half time to their work, and they have achieved a routine and consistent system of communication with students, parents, and each other. He cautions that teachers who job-share must have compatible philosophies regarding classroom management, grading, and discipline and must be willing and take time to plan together. Glathar and Rybel fulfill these requirements.

The teachers' commitment to providing the best education possible for each child they teach has been emphasized throughout this Bulletin. Indeed, they are never satisfied with merely maintaining the status quo. This dedication to improving instruction is not limited to their immediate classrooms. Many are involved as members of the wider community of professional educators. Each year several Oregon State University student teachers and many practicum students gain vital experience at Philomath Middle School because teachers are willing to share their expertise and experience by arranging and supervising teacher preparation experiences. Numerous staff members participate actively in statewide professional groups and have received recognition for their work. Among those recognized have been Larry Sleeman as one of fifteen Oregon teachers of mathematics nominated for the Presidential Awards for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching. Frances Harper has been Home Economics Teacher of the Year chosen by the American Home Economists Association. Greg Sumners won a place in the Expanding Cultural Horizons Overseas (ECHO) program of Portland State University and studied in Finland last summer. Bonnie Laing is coeditor of the State Health Committee Newsletter.

More than half of the staff members have attended the annual statewide Health Conference at Seaside. Teachers feel this has had a profound influence upon the entire staff; from the experience has evolved a pervasive attitude on health awareness and concern for each other's fitness and good health. This attitude is manifested in staff aerobics exercise sessions and frequent Friday afterschool "fun runs" followed by family potluck suppers in staff members' homes. The

fellowship they share off-hours seems to build upon and also enhance the cooperation that is evident in their work teaching children.

Conclusion

The staff of Philomath Middle School works hard and long to build and maintain a fine program, one that serves the academic needs of students as well as their developmental needs. The many facets of that program that are described here do not adequately picture that program. The positive, orderly climate in which all these components are embedded can only be "felt."

Philomath Superintendent Lee Edwards can "feel" that climate and concludes, "I've been in several states and in many school systems, but I've just not found a program that measures up to Philomath Middle School elsewhere in Oregon or anywhere."

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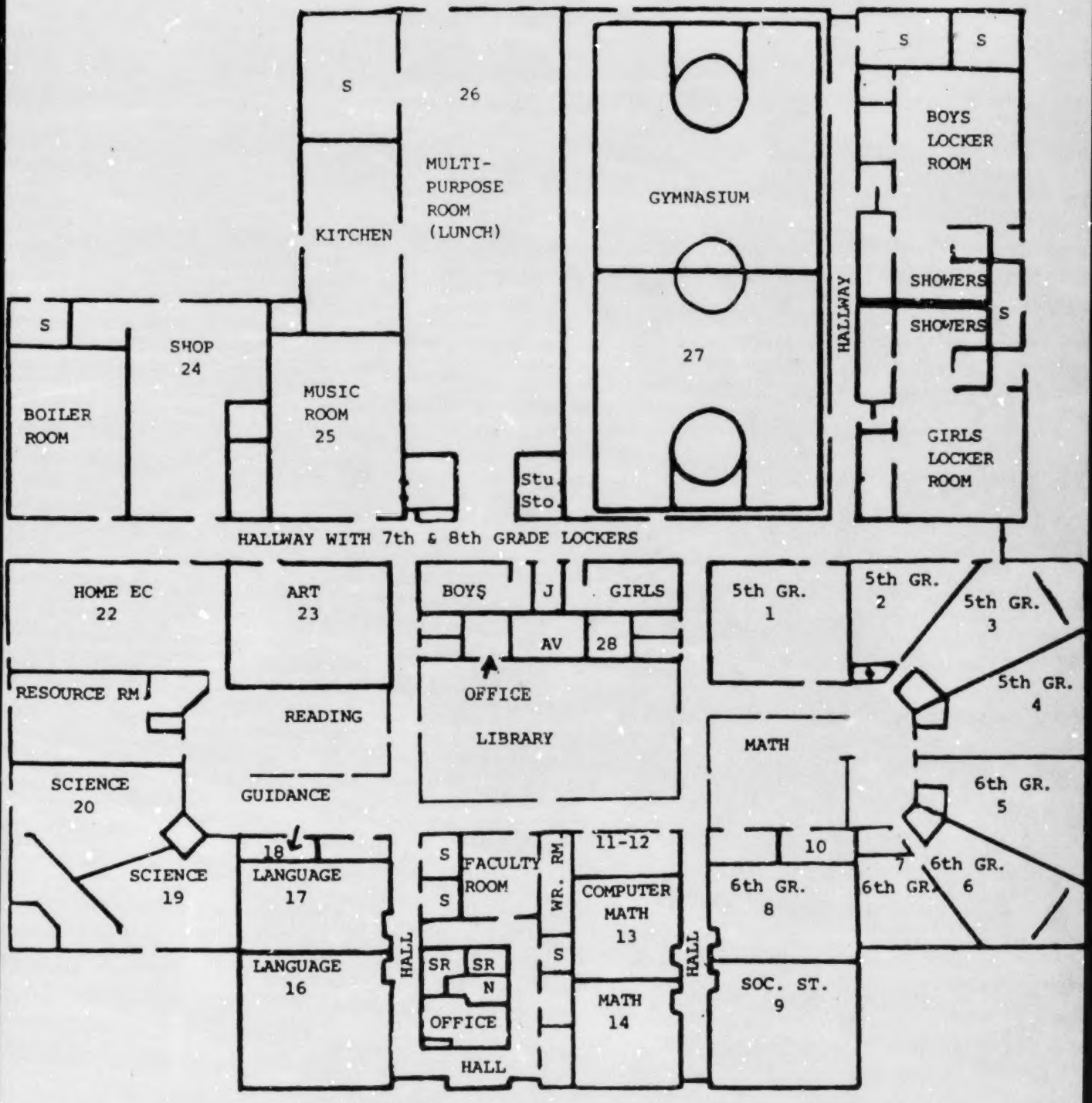
Appendix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